Appointment, retention and promotion of academic staff in higher education institutions

A report to the HEFCE by the Scottish Council for Research in Education, University of Glasgow and Nottingham Trent University

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Executive summary

This report concerns factors that affect academic staff recruitment, retention and promotion in the higher education sector in England. These factors include processes, quality, possible pathways and areas of good practice related to all academic staff with teaching responsibilities. The project addresses the link between policies and practices related to teaching staff and sustaining and improving standards in higher education.

The project, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) is the co-operative effort of three groups: the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE), the University of Glasgow and Nottingham Trent University.

Evidence from the literature indicates that increasingly teaching is being given less priority in comparison with research. Staff recruitment, retention and promotion have also been influenced by policy initiatives.

It is clear from data collected from stakeholder interviews, case studies in higher education institutions (HEIs), and an email survey of Heads of Human Resources in HEIs, that there is no panacea to cope with the diversity of staffing required in higher education. Some institutions, departments and subjects are more seriously affected than others by factors outside the higher education sector. Influences include location and competition in terms of pay and alternative conditions. The perceived impact of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is considerable in decisions made about an individual's selection and promotion, and some staff believe it has diminished recognition of the importance of teaching and students' learning.

The higher education sector emphasises individualism and pays less attention to issues to do with staff development and equality of opportunity. Although some institutions have put a lot of effort into their policies and practices, the sector has few appraisal, mentoring or career guidance schemes that are helpful. There is often a lack of transparency in appointment and promotion criteria and processes, and those working part-time and/or on short-term fixed contracts can be excluded from staff development and promotion opportunities.

The tensions identified in relation to teaching staff in higher education include how to:

- encourage staff to develop their careers as teachers rather than becoming research stars or moving into administration in order to gain promotion
- accommodate all-rounders as well as specialists at all levels in an institution
- deal with funding policies that reward research and undermine teaching in higher education
- cope fairly with differential rewards associated with academic research and more practitioner or professional focused links with those outside higher education
- balance individualism and collegial values in higher education
- reconcile the need for flexible staffing strategies with equality of opportunity
- provide better support and training for managers and leaders in higher education
- enhance retention and benefit from staff mobility.

The main report summarises the evidence and emerging issues concerning recruitment, retention and promotion of teaching staff in higher education. In the appendices, more detail is available on the research questions, the context of the study, views of stakeholders and the survey of human resource managers in HEIs. Case studies of policies and practices in six HEIs illustrate diversity in management practices and individuals' experiences.

1: Introduction and context

1.1 Introduction

This project funded by the HEFCE is the co-operative effort of three groups: the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE), the University of Glasgow and Nottingham Trent University.

The study explores factors affecting academic staff recruitment, retention and promotion in the higher education sector in England, paying particular attention to processes, quality, possible pathways and areas of good practice related to teaching staff. The project also addresses the link between policies and practices related to academic staff and sustaining and improving standards in higher education. The study refers to all academic staff (including those on hourly-paid contracts), research and management staff, and administrators with closely associated academic responsibilities.

1.2 The context

There are four contextual issues which will impact on the project:

- how higher education is funded

- the current costing environment

- changing employment legislation

- the behaviour of the labour market.

All the evidence from the literature points to increasing problems in the areas of recruitment, retention and promotion of academic staff. The neglect of the role of teaching, despite its core importance in the quality of higher education, has created distortions which will be difficult to remedy. It may be inadequate to assume that by supporting strong researchers, and to a lesser extent those who wish to take management roles, that teaching quality will also be enhanced.

Policy initiatives have had a mixed effect. Those policies designed to support teaching have been overshadowed and undermined by policies which have the opposite effect. Other trends in HE, such as the comparative erosion of salaries and conditions, the rise of insecure employment, and the lack of penetration of equality of opportunity have made the occupation rather less attractive. In some areas where there are few alternative career opportunities this has had less direct impact, but can hardly encourage the motivation and productivity of staff. A key feature of HE is diversity and there is some danger that offering general prescriptions may benefit some areas but create further problems in others. Given this context, this study aimed to uncover and scrutinise what is happening on the ground at a level that reflects this diversity. Appendix 2 contains the detailed literature review.

1.3 Research questions

The researchers set out to answer seven main research questions.

Each of these questions was expanded with a series of more detailed queries and these are listed in Appendix 1.

- What are the issues that affect academic staff recruitment, retention and promotion?

- How do HEIs encourage effective recruitment, retention and promotion of academic staff?

- What are the relationships between maintaining and improving standards within HEIs and the progression of their academic staff?

- What are the routes available for academic staff to develop their careers?

- What areas of best practice can be identified in relation to staff appointment, retention and promotion?

- How can strategies be developed in higher education to support depth and breadth of career opportunities for academic staff across the sector?

- What might be the cost implications of such recommendations?

1.4 Design, methods and analysis

1.4.1 Overview

There were three phases in this six month project (May-October 2001):

- a preliminary phase to clarify the brief and the main issues, to collate and review relevant studies and evidence and to prepare the research instruments

- a data collection phase to collect, concurrently, evidence from all the major stakeholders, undertake an analysis of HESA staff data and to build up case studies of HEI staffing practices

- analysis, validation and reporting.

Details of the methodology and research instruments are in Appendix 1.

1.5 Elements of the research

1.5.1 Literature review

The review of existing evidence relevant to the research questions is attached as Appendix 2.

1.5.2 Stakeholder perspectives

Perspectives from other principal stakeholders were collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with representatives from a range of organisations.

The summary analysis of these interviews and list of stakeholders are in Appendix 3. The interview schedule is in Appendix 1.

1.5.3 *Information on current policies*

Information on current policies and practices was gathered from an email survey of Human Resource (HR) Managers/Directors of Personnel in all HEIs in England. The email survey structured questionnaire is in Appendix 1. Of the 132 institutions surveyed, 35 (27%) responded: the lower than expected response rate may be because the survey had to be conducted over the summer vacation. However, the profile of respondents adequately reflects the overall profile of higher education in England. It includes pre- and post-1992 universities and institutions of higher education, with a good geographical spread covering urban and more suburban/rural locations, and different size organisations.

Evidence from the email survey of HR managers is in Appendix 4.

1.5.4 *Case studies*

Six HEIs were identified for more detailed study. These covered 'ancient', 'modern' and post-1992 institutions and included one non-university HEI. Within each HEI, two departments/units were selected to cover a range of faculties and disciplines. Evidence related to the research questions was collected from the various categories of academic staff employed in the department/unit.

Appendix 5 contains the evidence from the case studies.

2: Overview of issues

The findings from the data collected from stakeholder interviews, case-studies and email survey of heads of human resources are presented in terms of the (albeit overlapping) research questions set out in the original specification. Where appropriate, they have been sub-divided into different headings such as 'outwith institutions' or 'stakeholder views' and 'within institutions'. Equality issues have emerged, concerning the recruitment, retention and promotion of higher education staff. Government pressure is to mainstream such issues, and therefore research questions addressed in this report include reference to equal opportunities.

To protect the confidentiality of individual informants where direct quotations are used in this report or in case studies (Appendix 5), staff in permanent promoted posts (senior lecturer and above in pre-1992 HEIs, principal lecturer and above in post-1992 HEIs) may be referred to simply as 'senior staff'. Similarly, those on basic grades, or with fixed-term or hourly-paid contracts, may have their views attributed to 'junior staff'. The analysis, of course, takes account of the very different circumstances of sub-sets of the 'junior staff' group: unpromoted staff with permanent contracts; fixed-term contract staff (some of whom have fractional contracts); hourly-paid part-time teachers (most of whom are on temporary contracts), and permanent fractional contract staff. Informants compared teaching, administrative and research aspects of their posts. We have interpreted teaching as taking into account lectures and direct contact with students as well as associated activities including preparation, supervision and assessment of students, and course design and curriculum development. Administration would include background activities such as keeping course records, recruitment activities, providing references, organising staffing and class lists, and making examination arrangements.

2.1 What are the issues that affect academic staff recruitment, retention and promotion?

2.1.1 Factors outwith institutions

Some factors which affect staffing are outside the control of higher education institutions. These factors include variations in supply of qualified staff for different subject disciplines, as well as location and competition in terms of pay and alternative conditions. Activities related to both the RAE and to a lesser extent to the QAA are perceived as affecting staff recruitment, retention and promotion.

Staff shortages

Many stakeholders report that there is a shortage in overall numbers of qualified staff in some disciplines and this is now encouraging some HEIs to look overseas. Evidence from one case study (Appendix 5, Case study C), where over a third of

staff come from outside the UK, indicates this is seen as necessary to attract *'top quality researchers'*.

Such is the variation across different types of HEIs and subjects that another case study (F) has only 2% of staff who were not born in the UK. Where UK professional expertise is required, eg teacher education or some aspects of law, then HEIs are less likely to seek staff from abroad.

Market forces may discourage staff from embarking upon or continuing a career in higher education. There is competition from other HEIs in recruiting staff particularly those who are desirable in the research transfer market or who are in new and rapidly expanding areas, such as sports science. It is also proving difficult and/or expensive to recruit staff with appropriate professional experience in fields such as law, accountancy and education. This is largely due to adverse salary differentials between higher education and professional practice, exacerbated by experienced staff often being older and therefore more expensive recruits than those coming through academic routes.

Academic jobs are becoming less attractive. Some staff find better options elsewhere; for example, in one creative technology department there is a drift away from academia to more stimulating work environments. For some people in high cost areas for housing and travel, salary is an important issue. In contrast, a pleasantly situated HEI reported relatively high retention of staff, and a plentiful supply of applicants for part-time work who had retired from less congenial parts of the country. Family considerations, especially children's schooling and employment opportunities for partners, affect and indeed limit the possible choices for some staff. There is some feeling that academics are an underpaid and over-burdened profession and that the things which once made the profession attractive – relative individual autonomy and the chance to pursue one's own interests – are being eroded for some staff by increasing workload and bureaucratic burdens.

Despite many statements from all sources about the pressures of administration and stress related to the joint requirements of research, administration and teaching, many interviewees nevertheless stressed the enduring attractions of the relative autonomy, variety and flexibility of academic life. For example, a previously self-employed businessman commented:

> *I had worked in what I call the real world for quite a few years and just found it boring.*

Others found academic life suited their values: a senior academic who had worked outside HE and had several years' research experience had opted for a teaching/administration role because:

> *... it is the value base of why I do things, working with get-up-and-go students.*
>
> (F1.4)

RAE and QAA

The perceived impact of the RAE is considerable. An individual's contribution, or potential contribution, to the RAE is very influential in selection and progression

decisions made about that individual. Moreover, the terms of the RAE are widely perceived to promote quantity rather than quality in research. The effect of the RAE has been to exaggerate the perceived importance of research (and publications) and, in some institutions, to diminish the perceived value of teaching and supporting students' learning. In several case studies, informants suggested that a heavy teaching workload inhibited their research, and as a consequence, their promotion prospects.

QAA provides an external assessment, but may have relatively little influence on the careers of individual teaching staff since, in most institutions, promotion was based on research and/or administrative responsibilities.

Need for flexibility

A frequently expressed view was the need for more flexibility in promotions and recruitment across the sector (as well as within individual institutions). Flexibility could encourage the recruitment of a more varied workforce especially if pay could be adjusted for individuals. However, unions would oppose moves away from national pay scales. Not everyone who argued for flexibility recognised that it might conflict with transparency, and that some staff might be disadvantaged by flexibility.

Equality issues

More flexibility in recruitment and promotion could counter drives for more transparency associated with fair employment practices. The study revealed a tendency for HEIs, or at least individual departments, to recruit and promote 'in their own image'. Some prestigious departments select their new staff from a narrow range of institutions, even in one case (E) having 81% staff from only three other HEIs. The effect on gender balance can be seen in three of the case study institutions, where women comprise only just over a quarter of the staff. Changes in legislation for race relations and disability are putting increasing pressures on HEIs to implement equitable staffing policies. It will no longer be acceptable to explain (as one case study did) that low staff recruitment from minority ethnic groups is due to the lack of ethnic diversity in the locality. There will be a statutory duty on HEIs to address the issue.

2.1.2   Factors within institutions

Mission and priorities

Since funding is linked to research achievements as well as student numbers, it is hardly surprising that the balance between research (and publications) and teaching is often tense, with high quality teaching being perceived as an unlikely route to promotion. In one of our less research-oriented case study HEIs, several informants saw administration as the only route to promotion. Mission statements tend to assert that both teaching and research are priorities but, in practice, most HEIs emphasised excellence in administration and research, rather than teaching, in the criteria for promotion. In these cases, full-time staff were more likely to be encouraged to delegate some of their teaching responsibilities to part-time or

hourly-paid staff than give up their administrative duties. Similarly it was routine in the more research-oriented HEIs for active researchers to relinquish their teaching to hourly-paid staff or postgraduate students. Such staff in HEIs that are trying to raise their research profile were often caught by pressure to undertake research and publish, as well as to fulfil traditionally substantial teaching commitments and even administrative tasks as well. Staff who wanted to move into research often reported that their research was not valued and was squeezed out by the inexorable demands of teaching.

Although HEIs have centrally defined mission statements, how much variation in practice is tolerated between different departments? The case studies show that most departments have delegated responsibilities for important aspects of staff recruitment, appointment and promotion, and the ways in which these are interpreted will affect the retention of staff. Individual departments rather than the institution as a whole may seek Investors in People (IIP) status. It is more difficult to sustain even a department-centred system when there is geographical spread of departments, across different countries, especially if the communication system does not facilitate transparency in the implementation of policies and procedures.

Unsurprisingly, we discovered diversity across the HE sector, in mission statements, priorities and in academic cultures as described by interviewees. In all case studies, we also discovered diversity within the HEI, and in most cases within departments. Moreover, although all our case study interviewees could be seen to be contributing to their HEI's complex mission, by no means all of them felt that their contribution was valued, either by the department or by the institution. Where the dominant priority was research, those with heavy teaching loads felt less valued, and similarly in predominantly teaching institutions, those trying to establish a research culture sometimes felt marginalised and undervalued.

Explicit policies and procedures

Many stakeholders have commented on the lack of transparent promotions procedures as well as a lack of internal promotion opportunities and reward systems. One stakeholder even stated that promotion procedures in higher education are "*shrouded in secrecy*".

Not all HEIs have explicit policies and procedures related to staff appointments and promotions although most address some aspects such as procedures for shortlisting and interviewing. Certainly there is lack of transparency in HEIs that have adopted more 'flexible' approaches to salary and conditions of service. The benefits of transparency depend on who is talking. Senior staff in case study A thought that the high retention of staff could be improved even further if the university provided resources that allowed them to offer individuals attractive positions and packages to stay. (In this HEI and others, it is possible for staff in shortage areas to 'negotiate' their promotion, as an alternative to taking up an offer elsewhere.) However, their more junior colleagues felt the system lacked transparency and was too much in the hands of others. Career progress and promotion may rely on the support of the professoriate. Policies and intentions for

staffing may be superseded by the need for departments to reduce their budgets in order to help the institution to reduce or balance the overall deficit.

In the last decade, expectations of the qualifications and publications record of candidates for a first lecturing post were deemed to have risen, so that many new appointees are likely to be at least in their late twenties.

Pay, status and contracts

More than a third of all academic staff on the lecturer scale are on fixed-term contracts or are part-time. In addition there are the many hourly-paid staff who remain largely unknown and unmonitored in HEIs. While some part-timers have secure, fractional contracts through choice, and may have been through normal appointment procedures, many others (including hourly-paid staff) do not have to go through such procedures. Recruitment of such staff is usually done on the basis of personal recommendation, and in some cases there is no-one in an HEI with an overview of all these staff.

Only one of our case studies institutions did not make extensive use of hourly-paid staff. Although we found some who were glad to work in this way, because it was not their only source of income (see Profile 7), most hourly-paid staff and staff on short-term contracts usually hope that a less than full-time post will lead to a full-time, long-term appointment.

Profile 1: Lecturer on fixed-term contracts (FTCs)

Fixed-term contracts for 11 years, permanent lecturer for 3 years at the HEI where he completed undergraduate and postgraduate degrees – white, male, 40s.

Appointment: He was appointed to a teaching fellowship for 2 years and then to a 4-year FTC with the understanding that the post would become permanent at the end of the period. The RAE intervened and the knock-on effect of buying in researchers at senior level was that junior posts were frozen. His FTC became a rolling FTC. It was not until 1998, at the age of 40, that he was appointed to a permanent post.

Retention: He has confidence in his teaching ability which attracts large numbers of students to his courses, but he feels 'it counts for nothing'. He has been retained by his optimism, by the psychological effect of insecurity which left him feeling personally worthless, and by an unwillingness to start again outside academia. He was not offered any staff development during his 11 years on FTC. He enjoys his conditions of work. Under the new chair of the department, he has taken on an administrative role.

Promotion: He remains optimistic, but sees little chance. He is no longer mobile. He took on a first mortgage at 41, and had his first child at 42. He is used as a 'teaching workhorse' so has little time for research.

Some interviewees were able to look back on many years of insecurity before they had achieved a permanent contract, while others remained more or less hopeful for the future (see Profile 1). However, it is clear from this study that a series of fixed-term contracts does not provide secure employment or offer substantial promotion opportunities.

The virtues of flexibility in terms of employment emerged in more than one case study. For example, in case study F, some managers would have valued the opportunity to provide incentive allowances for junior staff taking on (possibly temporary) administrative responsibilities.

Everyone interviewed in one high achieving institution displayed levels of discontent about salaries – especially those who had actually applied for industry positions but had decided that these positions did not provide them with as much freedom and autonomy to do their research as higher education institutions did.

Staff development

Some institutions offer inductions as well as further development opportunities. (See Appendix 4 for further details.)

Hourly-paid staff suffered from the lack of staff development opportunities in some institutions; for some, opportunities were available, but in their own time and without pay. In case study B, where there are problems of retention among the large number of hourly-paid staff, there are comparatively good support mechanisms for the group and they could make the transition to lecturing staff.

Some staff also feel constrained by their teaching workload from pursuing research and staff development opportunities, which in turn weakens their promotion prospects.

In general there is a perceived lack of funding for external staff development. Often interviewees acknowledged good intentions, but felt they were not enough*:*

> *"They are very much into trying to let you develop the way you want in the department, but again there is not much money there to help you."*

Equality issues

A challenge to transparency is when management information systems are not equally efficient for all staff, as in case study F where a distant campus had inadequate access to the HEI's system which included information about staff development and promotion opportunities.

Some equal opportunities issues are unresolved (such as continuing alleged racial and sexual discrimination) and some are ignored or not perceived as problems (part-timers and hourly-paid staff). Frequent arguments are that it is difficult to recruit staff from minority groups to work in 'white' areas. Yet even in our case study HEIs in culturally diverse areas, there was little sign of appointing staff from 'the whole community'.

Age structures of staff can inhibit promotion. This is clearly linked with indirect discrimination against women, or less frequently men, who have had career breaks for child rearing. There also seems to be more generalised prejudice against older staff. As one informant in her 50s, who had spent most of her career on a series of fixed-term contracts, put it:

> *"If you have a good idea in your 20s, they give you the job; if you are in your 30s, they give somebody else the job; if you are in your 40s plus, they tend to sack you for it."*

2.2 How do HEIs encourage effective recruitment, retention and promotion of academic staff?

HEIs adopt various strategies to recruit and sustain high quality staff. These are listed as summary points below as examples of what is being done. These points arise from within institutions, through our case studies and the email survey completed by HR managers but clearly not all institutions would subscribe to all the strategies.

2.2.1 Recruitment

To encourage recruitment HEIs have developed:

- policies on equal opportunities (including disability), Investors in People status and widening participation, giving institutions a progressive reputation

- well-documented and thorough recruitment and appointment procedures for most staff

- single long-term lecturer scales

- flexibility in deciding the point on the scale for appointment of new staff eg in recognising experience outside HE

- support for non-teaching staff with necessary skills and interest/enthusiasm to become lecturers

- incentives such as generous removal expenses and start-up packages

- electronic posting of academic vacancies, to increase overseas applications

- collaboration with outside organisations such as NHS Trusts.

Salary issues were the most frequently recurring themes in the responses from the HR managers as inhibitors to recruitment (Appendix 4).

> *"The national conditions of service in new universities inhibit flexibility, stop us paying the appropriate rates for academic jobs and have unnecessary restrictions on working practices. This means that we cannot increase productivity to pay for much needed pay increases to recruit quality staff."*
>
> (Human Resource Manager, Post-92 HEI)

Other constraints on recruitment were similar to those mentioned earlier in this report, including competition from non-university employers and from other HEIs leading to *"RAE recruitment wars"*, the perceived reputation of an institution, and the general over-emphasis on research.

Reputation in research or in quality of students is deemed the major factor for satisfactory recruitment to departments and HEIs.

2.2.2 Retention

There are only slight variation rates in retention and turnover rates for different disciplines across the sector. There are greater variations in retention between case study institutions between disciplines.

To encourage retention, HEIs promote:

- equal opportunities strategies and action plans

- secondments and leave of absence schemes including opportunities to maintain links with industry or professional practice/consultancy

- generous provision for sabbaticals and externally funded research

- staff development programmes and mentoring for all staff including part-timers and hourly-paid staff who are likely to have regular teaching commitments

- schemes to encourage fast track promotion

- a pleasant campus and positive institutional ethos (and apparent *"lack of political intrigue"*)

- job satisfaction, particularly through direct contact with students, working with supportive colleagues, an open apolitical culture and relative autonomy

- redeployment, regrading and retraining

- employment of research and teaching assistants to stimulate research culture and free up teaching staff to undertake research (there are positive and negative effects to this)

- conversion of fixed-term contracts to permanent contracts

- 'prizes' via external funding for good teaching and learning

- local teaching fellowship schemes.

These various approaches offer no quick fix and need to be carefully implemented. For example, although senior staff may advocate mentoring for all staff, more junior staff indicated in one case study that its application was patchy. Although employing research and teaching assistants to free teaching staff to undertake research is generally viewed positively (at least by other staff), it may put undue pressure on junior staff to take on more teaching than is good for their research careers. Generous provision for external research proved not to be generous enough for one course leader who reported having to hand back a research grant because of pressures of course development and teaching.

Some, though not all, case study institutions were concerned about how they could reward and retain good teachers. One (case study D) had completed a round of promotions targeted to recognise excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. Several junior and senior staff in case study F discussed the possibility of providing reward and development for "*those who are ambitious in terms of their teaching*". A readership-equivalent scheme to enable good teachers to develop their practice and support colleagues was suggested.

HR managers mentioned the importance of supportive management structures for retention. Some rated the ethos of the institution as being more important than any specific policy or initiative. A positive ethos might encourage team working and the development of work/life balance policies.

Membership of the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) has provoked a mixed reaction from our informants. Some (especially those from the research-focused HEIs) thought it irrelevant to their business; a few individuals and some HR respondents thought it would enhance the status of teaching and encourage teaching staff to remain in their HEI.

Questioning the advisability of retention, an informant from case study D commented:

> *"There is no difficulty in retaining staff, rather the reverse. Higher education might be improved if there was more mobility."*

However, for HEIs that have invested in their staff, poor retention is perceived as problematic. In case study C, a substantial proportion of new entrants leave within the first few years. Contributory factors are perceived to be: poor salary levels, resulting in inability to survive in the city, particularly with a family; the probation/major review system which for some is a deterrent; poor mentoring; and detrimental aspects of the work environment (bureaucracy, lack of collegiality, poor office facilities). For 'staff who only teach', a strong research ethos can inhibit retention. It is important that their work is valued and acknowledged, but all too often informants indicated that their teaching was undervalued and unrecognised. Similarly, in an HEI with a predominantly teaching culture, we found researchers who felt they would move eventually in search of *"a proper research culture"*. Again, the issue of diversity arises: all HEIs need diversity in their staff, but appear to have difficulty in conveying to their staff the message that diversity is valued.

2.2.3   Promotion

Although 80% of respondents to the email survey reported that their HEIs had promotion policies applicable to permanent and fixed-term/part-time staff, only 14% said they had such policies for hourly-paid staff (see Appendix 4, Table 1). A third of respondents had fixed promotions criteria that were applied across all departments, but well over half adopted more flexible criteria.

Policies and practices that support the promotion of high quality academic staff echo many of those listed under retention (eg single lecturer scale, sabbaticals). Others were more directed towards career advancement or to the smooth running of the institution:

- transparent and objective criteria for promotion
- quality assessment of teaching skills of promotion candidates
- in-house job evaluation
- appraisal scheme
- rotation of staff - reward for temporary responsibility.

Management can manipulate progression by the allocation of tasks and opportunities. While fast-track promotion schemes benefit high fliers (especially research stars in some HEIs) and provide HEIs with more flexibility, other staff who are by-passed feel undervalued. Whether or not they remain in the institution

seems to depend on the status and positive aspects of their HEI and on the priority they put on their teaching. Staff felt that restructuring and rationalisation in their HEIs created both insecurity and poorer prospects for promotion.

It is clear that good teaching alone is rarely sufficient to gain promotion, even in those HEIs that presented themselves as predominantly teaching organisations. Promoted staff may be diverted to administration, management and/or research, spending less time in direct contact with students. Some promoted staff in our case studies regretted this. Schemes such as a readership-equivalent with responsibility for working with colleagues to develop teaching practice might help keep good teachers in the lecture-room, if that is where they wish to be. It also seems necessary to make provision for identifying and rewarding good teaching wherever it occurs, given the many positive comments about the quality of teaching and the commitment of hourly-paid staff in our case study institutions.

2.3 What are the relationships between maintaining and improving standards within HEIs and the progression of their academic staff?

This question triggered comments from all sources both about the standards of student performance and about the quality of staff and their work – especially research. It is especially important to consider whether or not initiatives designed to improve standards actually threaten them.

2.3.1 The Research Assessment Exercise

Although no direct evidence is available, many stakeholder informants intuitively felt that good treatment of staff would lead to enhanced RAE and QAA ratings. However, it is acknowledged in the broad academic community that the RAE has also led to an aggressive 'research transfer market' predominantly benefiting those already at the top of the senior lecturer grade. In some faculties, headhunting to enhance RAE ratings has had impact on the progression of existing staff.

One desired effect of the RAE has been increased output of published research. However, many informants are insistent that this has had a detrimental effect on quality of research, not least because often research is presented for publication before there has been sufficient time for reflection.

2.3.2 Quality of teaching

HEIs have their own internal quality assessment procedures. For one, this includes assessments of teaching skills of promotion candidates. While budget constraints may result in only a small number of staff being promoted, this could be interpreted as a positive quality assurance aspect. At least, it sends a message to staff that high quality teaching is valued by the HEI.

There is some uncertainty whether or not the use of postgraduates and other part-time staff affects quality. Some HEIs use postgraduates and other part-time staff to teach 1st and 2nd years. Provided such staff are adequately supported, this is not necessarily detrimental to the student experience, and we found some

evidence of high commitment amongst such staff (see Profile 8). There is wider use of part-time staff in specialist HE colleges. Stakeholders consider that the use, for example in art and music schools, of deploying practising professionals enhances quality, and could be increased.

While continuing professional development (CPD) and ILT are designed to show a commitment to professionalism, there is some disagreement among stakeholders and HEI staff about the value of ILT. Membership of ILT is not encouraged in all HEIs.

In case study E, quality assessment by the QAA has had a positive impact when poor ratings have driven curriculum development and improvements in student attainment. Some staff found the process disruptive for their students, and had arranged for a small group of staff to handle most of the administrative work for the QAA, to ensure that students did not suffer (case study F).

2.3.3 QAA combined with RAE

The combination of QAA assessments of teaching quality with the RAE has pressured departmental development in some institutions. This development takes one of two forms, both of which appear to enhance the parity of teaching and research.

a) In a department with a tradition of excellence in teaching but little record of research, case study D2, moves to increase research output focus on pedagogics as an appropriate area of investigation.

b) A department with a high RAE rating, but a low assessment of teaching quality, case study E2, viewed the improvement of teaching and student attainment as necessitating cultural change. A comprehensive development, negotiated piecemeal through institutional committees, included the creation and staffing of an education unit with a director at professorial level, a complete review of the curriculum, the identification of staff training needed in teaching skills, and moves to build on and strengthen existing research in pedagogics.

In both cases, there remains anxiety that the RAE does not recognise pedagogic research as of equal value to research in other sciences.

2.3.4 Student performance

Staff in some HEIs feel they attract students by their reputation and by word of mouth. If these current students are of high calibre, their recommendations will attract similar students. In other HEIs, graduate employment statistics are seen as confirmation of quality of teaching.

2.4 What are the routes available for academic staff to develop their careers?

There is consensus among informants that the domination of the two traditional models prevails: become a research star or a manager. Those who try to bridge

both can feel powerless. Profile 2 illustrates some of the conflicting priorities in higher education.

Profile 2: Head of Department

White, male, 50s, UK, at institution for 25 years, had experience at other institutions. Believes that "'if you are an academic you can't really make the separation between work and home".

Management style: More of an academic leader than a manager, a strong defender of the traditional values of academia. Does not like the way that much of the system is now geared to create an individual atomised environment, believes that this goes against the notion of a community of scholars.

"The needs of the institution are entirely different and part of my job is to defend this group against the school, and against the university. So, whatever their needs are I am not that concerned about it, except when they tell me about things that I regard as important and that is ideas, getting good intellectuals in…"

Profile 2 continued…

Management approach: Feels that he has little influence over the approach that he takes as there is a high level of control from the institution. "*It is difficult in a very large organisation to have some influence about what's going on, so I do not feel empowered at the moment, I feel the opposite, I feel disenfranchised. I'm not able to influence the way things have gone.*"

Although very highly respected within his specific discipline, a world-class researcher and regarded by many as a 'big star' of academia, is still unable to have much say with regards to management of the department. "*(This institution) is a big pond and it's difficult to be a big fish here.*"

Management view: Feels that should have more freedom in recruiting and appointing people.

Also believes that the RAE is putting too much pressure on academics to produce quantity rather than quality in terms of research output. "*Our dean, I think, is of the form activity school of thought, get it out, whereas I am not. I'd much rather read one bloody good article, or one bloody good book than reams and reams and reams of material which people had thrown out.*"

In planning a career, choice of institution is vital since researchers will not flourish in predominantly teaching institutions, and those whose priority is teaching are likely to remain at low status in high-flying research HEIs. The evidence suggests that the RAE has emphasised this divide, as the research-focused HEIs attract more experienced research staff and have the culture and resources to support them. Profile 3 is an example of the fast track, headhunted researcher.

> **Profile 3: Professor**
>
> *White, male, 40, UK, first and second degrees from the HEI where he is now working; post-doc at Oxbridge, first appointment and subsequent chair at prestigious US HEI..*
>
> *Appointment:* Had contacts at present HEI, head hunted and offered post, tailored to requirements. Individually negotiated salary. Keen to return to UK for family reasons.
>
> *Retention:* Lower teaching load than previous post. Can concentrate on graduate classes. Salary level is OK but pension and health benefits poor compared to US. Could possibly return to the US. Appreciates value of own career route, *"Once you are in a job in a good institution then it's easier then to find a reasonable job."*
>
> *Promotion:* Onwards and upwards.

For those HEIs that may wish to increase their research activity, there are considerable difficulties. Staff are already likely to have substantial teaching and administrative workloads and will mostly be inexperienced researchers. Bringing new research experienced staff into the HEI signals a new priority but to change the institutional ethos and culture is a slow process.

As with all professions, there are those staff who plan their progression carefully and those who are more haphazard or see their career progression being lateral rather than vertical. At a certain point, some staff recognise that they may not have progressed as far as they wished and remain (disgruntled or happy) at a modest level. Profile 4 illustrates someone relatively happy with her lot.

There are opportunities to fast track through an HEI's special initiative or selective recruitment and promotions procedures (see Profile 5). It also helps if an individual was already known in the organisation (see Profile 3). If progression is slow then researchers may move on to another institution. Deliberate specialisation in a shortage area can lead to rapid career progression, and the study identified at least one individual who had opted for special responsibility (as equal opportunities officer) which had led quickly to promotion. This move proved a cul-de-sac as the post was susceptible to the changing priorities of the head of the institution; and the skills developed and demonstrated in the post were not recognised as appropriate for further promotion. To revert to subject specialism would have incurred a status and salary drop for this individual.

Profile 4:   A 'typical' woman's career

Principal lecturer, white, female, 40s, non-UK. Had 'no intention' to teach. Postgraduate study took her to America and then 'events' led to her settling in England. She was able to get hourly-paid work as a language teacher. She completed City & Guilds FE teaching certificate. For a time she was completing her PhD, teaching in two HEIs (including case study D), and bringing up a family.

Appointment: She was appointed to a 0.5 lectureship which she saw advertised. She then applied for a full-time vacancy, which was advertised but which she found out about internally.

Retention: "I work with what I have got. I wouldn't call it a career. My job serves a purpose. It is important so I do apply myself when I am in the place, but there are other things I am interested in. I am a mother, I am a friend, as well as being a lecturer." She enjoys her working conditions and her autonomy.

Promotion: She became principal lecturer after managing a large part-time staff. This remains her responsibility.

Profile 5: Fast track, entrepreneurial manager

White, female, 40s, UK, degree in linguistics, followed by world travel, EFL teaching and qualifications, and finally a scholarship to complete MA.

Appointment: One-year fixed-term to cover for maternity leave.

Retention: Organisational and management skills 'spotted' by senior management, given another 1-year contract to report on viability and future development of teaching area. At end of the year, appointment made permanent.

Promotion: Within 3 years of permanent appointment was appointed to lead new, merged department. Applied for further promotion to professorial level, not shortlisted. Criteria for appointments list excellence in management and leadership, entrepreneurial activity and research. Believes that, in practice, those who have developed research are successful candidates. Does not link unsuccessful application to her gender.

Across the sector there are staff development initiatives designed to support both individuals and institutions – goals which are sometimes irreconcilable. Staff may be supported in gaining a higher degree, in developing teaching or research skills, or making links with industry. HEIs also provide induction programmes and in-service workshops especially for teaching skills and awareness raising. It emerged from the study that although the main route for promotion for teaching staff is through taking on administrative and management responsibility, there is little training available for managers. This not only disadvantages the managers, but sometimes also their staff, where they find themselves in inefficiently organised units that lack a coherent and feasible staff or department development strategy.

Career development often has opportunistic components. Institutional change and restructuring can provide new career opportunities. The outcome could also be negative if expansion and mergers bring an influx of new staff perceived as damaging promotion prospects.

What remains exciting in higher education is the diversity of routes and backgrounds of academic staff. Profile 6 is of a career changer who brings industrial experience to teaching, research and administration. In contrast to this is the contribution from an older associate tutor (Profile 7) who offers his lifetime professional experience for young people entering the profession. It is a challenge for the sector to recognise the benefits of this diversity and reward those who have come through less traditional routes.

Profile 6:   Lecturer – Career changer/Late entrant

White, female, 50s, UK, newly appointed lecturer, previously worked in industry. Taught part-time in FE and training roles including at this HEI, working in discipline which found it hard to recruit.

Appointment: Moved from part-time training officer to full-time lecturer. Nearly did not accept because offered fixed-term contract in industry, but keen to get involved in academic role so accepted.

Retention: Much of career spent balancing work and family, enjoyed the flexibility of HE teaching and developing and supporting students, now getting involved in research, taken on major administrative role, Valued her role. "*If I were really worried about pay I would have taken the training role in industry but I would have less personal satisfaction* (in working briefly with trainees*) …not be seeing people* (students*) on a 3 year basis.*" Could go back to industry but decided to make commitment here.

Promotion: Not very ambitious (or optimistic); would prefer 'management route' as that was the "*only way to get any influence over teaching*".

Profile 7:   Hourly-paid Associate Tutor

Part-time hourly-paid Associate Tutor has been teaching in HE for last 7 years since retirement – white, male, 50s, British, retired schoolteacher.

Appointment: Recruited through personal contact, no formal application form or interview. Submitted CV subsequently for OfSTED requirements.

Retention: Enjoys the work, "*a wonderful opportunity*"; support is available if needed, appreciates flexibility. Attends staff meetings, although no longer paid for attendance. Financial rewards are not great, but thinks terms and conditions are "*fine at this stage of career*". Appreciates that could not afford to work in this way if not already in receipt of pension, but feels he is "*not exploited, as would not have done it if there had not been job satisfaction in it.*"

Promotion: *Not expected*.

2.4.1   Equal opportunities issues

Compared with the associate tutor (Profile 7), the occasional tutor (Profile 8) resents what she sees as the rough deal for part-timers. Remuneration is limited to student contact hours. There is a lack of consultation with part-timers on academic matters or governance; and, in this case, no access to staff development opportunities that would enhance promotion possibilities. Age discrimination has

been raised previously in this report, and still is likely to have more effect on women who have taken career breaks than others. Staff from groups under-represented in higher education promotions (including women, fixed-term and part-time staff) may be precluded from making their best contributions to higher education and from routes that would develop their own careers.

Profile 8: 'Occasional' Tutor

White, female, 30s, non-UK, studying for PhD part-time, now in 6th year. Previous experience as academic teacher and researcher, had been mature student at HEI.

Appointment: Offered various teaching roles by different staff over the years, no formal recruitment process, "*a casual chat with the lecturer*". Role is "*very part-time… if you have two classes a week, you're doing quite well*". Has had numerous contracts but no job descriptions. "*The job we do is much more broad and wide than would be indicated for the pay you get for 1 hour contact with students.*"

Retention: Paid £29 per hour of contact but has to do 5-6 hours extra work per hour of contact. Finds herself explaining to the lecturers what they need to do as she has more experience on the courses than they have (lecturer just gives the lecture).

Despite the fact that many part-time teachers feel pretty hard done by, "*the dedication of part-timers is just incredible because they really know their stuff.*" This is reflected in them receiving excellent student evaluations, "*far, far better than the full-time staff*". There is a 5:1 ratio of part-time teachers to full-time teachers.

There is no involvement of part-time teachers in governance or departmental issues – they are not even allowed to look at the exam papers. Facilities are also very poor. "*The whole thing is on a very casual unprofessional level.*"

Promotion: Would like to gain a full-time academic post, but feels no chance of post at present HEI as "*only takes people with good publishing track records*" although the "*system here is untransparent, definitely in regards to women*".

2.5 What areas of best practice can be identified in relation to staff appointment, retention and promotion?

2.5.1 Stakeholders' views

In this section, the responses from stakeholders are separated from other informants since they relate more to what HEIs 'should' do rather than examples of observed practice. For a more detailed discussion, see Appendix 3. Stakeholders generally welcome national initiatives such as Athena (the project to advance women in science, engineering and technology in HE), and the work of the Equality Challenge Unit.

Recruitment

For stakeholders, best practice in recruitment implies that HEIs should recruit from the widest possible pool, using open and fair advertising and publicity of posts. All staff involved in recruitment and selection should have training in equal opportunities following national guidelines. At present there is a perceived lack of suitable training materials. It is important that policies and mechanisms are in

place to provide baseline information about applications and recruitment so that the impact of policies can be assessed and acted upon.

Retention

Stakeholders suggest staff will remain in posts longer where the job itself is attractive and there is relevant staff development and meaningful annual appraisal. Management at all levels should have access to training, and this should include support for vice-chancellors e.g. through mentoring schemes.

Stakeholders also endorse the principle of paying the best more. This was put forward as a major suggestion, although some stakeholders note that there is more flexibility in the current system than is often assumed.

Promotion

The question of policy ownership is vital in higher education. Stakeholders favour open and transparent promotion policies that affect all staff, including senior management. However it is recognised that it may be difficult to reconcile transparency with flexibility in promotion.

2.5.2 Within institutions

The following examples of 'best practice' were put forward from their own experience by informants in the case studies.

Recruitment:

- involving departmental staff in recruitment procedures

- holding regular reviews of staff to translate fixed/part-time staff to permanent contracts. This does not currently occur in all HEIs.

Retention:

- providing access to quality staff development (support for new staff; reduce isolation; sabbatical opportunities)

- establishing and sustaining mentoring schemes (but a lot depends on the mentor/mentee relationship)

- providing imaginative and effective leadership and management

- offering additional pay incentives via, for example, a research incentive scheme

- developing schemes to reward outstanding teaching

- recognising and involving academic staff unions.

Promotion:

- holding high profile reviews of promotions criteria and acknowledging the need for openness. Many informants (including some of the stakeholders) endorsed the wish for transparency accompanied by monitoring and subsequent action about identified problems

- developing in-house job evaluation schemes – possibly following Equal Opportunities Commission guidelines

- recognising and rewarding excellence in teaching and learning in promotion procedures.

2.6 How can strategies be developed in higher education to support depth and breadth of career opportunities for academic staff across the sector?

Positive strategies were suggested for developing academic staff careers.

Staff development strategies should identify needs and plan for CPD at an early stage, and provide opportunities for staff to diversify and develop in their early careers. There should be clearer and faster career structures. General principles include the development of staff movement in and out of the HE sector for more flexible career paths (eg through use of fellowships and secondments). HEIs can be insular and would benefit from more links with the local community and business, and indeed other HEIs. Such links could include flexible contracts for joint appointments with other sectors. The sector should look at the wider role of HEIs in society, and at best practice in managing staff in other sectors such as the civil service and local government.

In principle, the sector should foster approaches that produce a more altruistic, inclusive and collegiate culture. This could entail enhancing and balancing the aspects of academic work that attract and retain staff, namely autonomy, variety and personal flexibility.

Financial strategies recommended include:

- enhancement of basic pay via national pay awards and a revised salary structure (as recommended in the Bett Report), to allow staff to have a reasonable standard of living and employment mobility

- performance related pay

- a single pension scheme across all HEIs

- a national subsidised mortgage scheme

- an increased London allowance.

HEIs need imaginative and effective departmental leaders with greater people management skills at all levels of academic management. In particular it is very important to have supportive management at early and formative parts of one's career. At present this appears to be very patchy.

Some informants think that these principles would be easier to enact if there were a lighter touch assessment and quality assurance and a decrease in external monitoring.

2.6.1 Specific points from institutions

Findings from the case studies suggest the following.:

Recruitment

HEIs should use better targeted and more reliable selection processes, with systematic assessment tailored to specific roles.

Retention

HEIs should:
- restructure grades and salary scales to reward different levels of contribution more accurately, to provide incentives and remove bottlenecks at the top of Senior Lecturer grade. Improve the non-cash elements of remuneration packages
- improve people management skills at all levels in HEIs
- look at the roles of part-time, fixed-term contract and hourly-paid staff to provide better career development opportunities and to prevent over-use of hourly-paid staff
- improve staff appraisal and make available career planning advice
- provide sabbaticals to refresh industrial/professional experience and to facilitate contacts with external sectors
- ensure the full breadth of useful contributions from staff is recognised in a tangible way, and that clear messages emanate from management about the value of all areas of academic activity: teaching, research and administration
- regulate and reduce workloads
- implement a retention allowance
- reduce administrative burdens.

Promotion

HEIs should:
- provide greater transparency in promotion processes (eg for older entrants)
- reward good teaching rather than linking promotion to administrative roles. There is a lot of support for teaching to be given greater recognition. For example those interviewed in case study B cited greater intrinsic satisfaction being gained from teaching than from research or administration.

2.6.2 Equal opportunities

In terms of equal opportunities, it might be necessary to reintroduce financial incentives and set targets for the employment of ethnic minority staff. Certainly equal opportunities should become embedded in policies, practices and culture with a major review of progress.

The irony of case study C is that the evidence shows that much of the policies, practices and environment here are inimical to depth and breadth of career opportunities. Nevertheless, many applicants seek posts here and many staff have chosen to stay.

Perhaps there is most concern in the case studies from and about those at the bottom of the career ladder. It is clear that there is major variation in the treatment of fixed-term, temporary part-time and hourly-paid staff compared to permanent staff in terms of human resources policies and procedures. This is evident from the HEFCE survey of HR managers (see Appendix 4, Table 1). As an example, induction for permanent staff was available in all respondent institutions, but available for hourly-paid staff in only 46%. There is a similar disparity in other policies and procedures that apply to hourly-paid staff. HEIs should address reasons why junior and hourly-paid staff are overburdened, exploited and inadequately supported. Both these groups need to be more involved in governance and 'departmental life'. HEIs should review the 'use and abuse' of hourly-paid staff.

2.7 What might be the cost implications of such recommendations?

It has been very difficult to gain more than general comments in response to this question as the possible scenarios are so varied in scope and size. Below is a brief summary of the comments from all sources.

In the case studies, all the staff appeared to be working very hard so a redistribution of resources among HEIs would not be helpful.

> " Implementation of the HR strategy is likely to have only a marginal impact on recruitment and retention because the funding is non-recurrent and the additional money is insufficient to achieve major structural change."
> (pre-92 university response to Human Resource Manager survey)

Therefore some fresh resources would be required to address issues of tangible recognition for teaching and to meet cost of living issues. Fresh resources would also be required to address the teaching burden and alleviate the overuse and exploitation of hourly-paid staff.

Changing institutional cultures is notoriously difficult, but appropriate investment would be returned by having long term strategies to reduce wasteful turnover, to review management development costs, and to widen participation in staffing. Certainly unresolved equal opportunities issues need to be addressed at national level. HEIs should be aware of the likely impact of the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) and the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), and the need for family friendly policies.

Stakeholders estimate the cost of addressing equal opportunities issues as between £188 million and £300 million. However, there are costs in doing nothing (poor performance, legal claims for 'equal pay for equal work' cases, low morale, HE reputation). The current situation is not amenable to 'quick-fix' solutions: generational differences cannot be alleviated quickly. There is a demographic time bomb that could be defused by encouraging today's graduates to enter academic life, and planning postgraduate opportunities to support the development of academic human resource.

Great care is required not to cause further damage to the aspects that the staff value most highly and to sustain what is good in the sector.

Stakeholders suggested it would be helpful to set up a workforce development plan and a national body to take over responsibility for staff development.

3: Accommodating tensions and contradictions

Any proposed strategies and policies will have to recognise the need to balance and accommodate certain tensions in HE. They should also take account of the diversity within the sector, within individual HEIs and within departments. Staff in HE demonstrate diversity in their strengths, in their contributions to their institution, and in their individual aspirations. There is therefore no simple panacea for the problems uncovered in this study, although policies at national, institutional and even departmental level can help. Examining some of the tensions and internal contradictions in the views we have collected may contribute to development of appropriate policies at national and local level.

3.1 Research and administration vs teaching

The dominance of research activities as criteria for recognition, reward, selection and promotion has the effect of squeezing out effort on teaching – the latter is sometimes seen as *detrimental* to career progress. The RAE sharpens this, and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) – as presently constituted – is deemed not to enhance the status of teaching but just adds to bureaucracy. The alternative route to advancement is administration/management, which is similarly incompatible with either substantial teaching or research.

Despite various mission statements, teaching is therefore the least extrinsically rewarded activity in higher education. Are there ways of encouraging good teachers to develop their careers without moving away from direct contact with students?

3.2 Specialisation vs being an all-rounder

This is a tension which affects individuals in their career development in HE, and has implications for their departments.

Being a specialist (eg having a tight research or administrative focus) benefits career progress. All-rounders do not gain the appropriate 'reputation', and can become 'work-horses'. Managers recognise that they need a range of staff with a diversity of strengths, but there is great pressure in research-focused HEIs to exclusively recruit and reward 'stars'. Having a department of 'stars' brings a whole host of problems, and can create the situation where the bulk of teaching and other work seen as a 'chore' is outsourced to casual, peripheral staff.

At the same time, too much specialisation inhibits variety, one of the most attractive aspects of working in HE for many staff. Is specialisation the only alternative for an ambitious academic, or can we develop policies which allow all-rounders to progress and to continue to use all their strengths?

3.3 Changing cultures vs quality provision

Staff are under pressure to be successful members of the research culture. HEIs struggling to enhance their research output may release teaching staff to engage in research by also taking on part-time and/or casual and peripheral staff. This has implications both for the quality of the services provided for students and for potential exploitation of staff.

How can methods of funding higher education better reflect quality of teaching as a priority for students and staff?

3.4 Academe vs practitioner focus

The dilemma here is whether to concentrate on 'academic' research or to encourage links with industry, external professions and bodies. The two approaches are rarely found together within the same unit. The first approach gains top RAE recognition and 'reputation' – at the individual level this leads to rapid career advancement. The second may be more lucrative for the individual in terms of consultancy for industry and business but less so for those in lower paid professions (e.g. education, social work) who need to maintain contact with practitioners to retain their credibility as teachers.

The question remains for institutions who wish to recruit and retain high quality staff about how to acknowledge and respond to the different contexts in which they are working.

3.5 Individualism vs team/collegial values

The best way to gain the so-called merit-based rewards and become a 'star' is to behave selfishly. This may produce an elite who offer poor role models for co-operation and collaboration. Although the RAE and QAA processes are both to some extent designed as a 'team games', the rewards for a team player within an HEI may be less than the rewards for a 'star'. At the same time the notion of collegiality and close collaboration is cherished among academics sharing the same discipline – but this embodies a recognition of individual freedom and autonomy.

It would be helpful to iron out some of the policy contradictions that encourage individualism and competition at the cost of collegiality.

3.6 Network/own image/expediency vs equality of opportunity

There is a great reluctance in high status institutions and departments to recruit staff and recognise qualities other than those perceived as traditional. There is an assumption that career route and background are critical; staff are drawn from a

narrow and elite range. This seems to offer an expedient way to ensure the maintenance of the culture and priorities important to an HEI but is in opposition to equal opportunities employment policies.

3.7 Equality of opportunity vs flexibility

It may be expedient to offer individualised salaries and accelerated progress to individuals with scarce attributes. However, such approaches cause demotivation among other staff, and may perpetuate wide scale discrimination against women, ethnic and other minorities, and result in an outmoded value system.

Institutions that deploy more equitable and transparent policies and procedures could benefit from more diverse recruitment of those outside the norm of linear careers. Does higher education benefit sufficiently from the experience of recruits into teaching of those who have taken unusual career routes and breaks?

3.8 Status vs salary

While university staff appreciate autonomy and a relatively high status, there are tensions for skilled practitioners in some areas where their salaries would be higher outside HE. For example there has been a reversal of the traditional situation where university lecturers had higher salaries than those teaching in school classrooms. The current maximum annual salary for the advanced skills classroom teacher is at least £3000 more than the maximum a principal lecturer in university can earn with discretionary points. Given the current age profile of HE staff in teacher education there could soon be serious staffing and retention problems.

3.9 Autonomy vs control

Academics are attracted by the large degree of autonomy. However, there is often difficulty in ensuring responsibility and accountability. Introducing control mechanisms inhibits that autonomy and can reduce creativity.

3.10 Management vs leadership

Academics profess to prefer inclusive styles of governance. They generally accept guidance from well respected academic leaders who treat them as peers.

Introducing tighter management systems may address some problems but weakens trust, collegiality and autonomy. Moreover reluctance to acknowledge the necessary skills involved in people management, leads to inappropriate management styles and general dissatisfaction. Is it not unrealistic to expect academics to adopt management roles, even temporary ones, without appropriate training and support?

3.11 Opportunities for entry vs exploitation

The heavy use of fixed-term contracts and hourly-paid staff offers institutions an apparent degree of flexibility in times of financial uncertainty (or could be

construed as an abrogation of responsibility by senior managers and passing on all risks to the staff). It may also seem to offer staff a convenient foothold into an academic teaching career. However, poor pay, conditions and peripheralisation seem to indicate a degree of exploitation, often over many years. The lack of career structures and transition mechanisms to more secure posts also mean that this offers little real opportunity to many.

It is recognised that some HEIs have begun to make contractual changes. However, it is vital that the remainder of the sector that has become so dependent on fixed-term contracts and hourly-paid staff should address how to support these staff for the mutual benefit of individuals and institutions.

3.12 Retention vs benefits of varied experience

Individual institutions invest in recruitment and staff development and wish to retain their able staff. It is therefore surprising that career guidance is such a low priority in higher education. Effective appraisal and mentoring schemes could benefit institutions. At the same time the sector, individuals and HEIs could benefit from mobility and ideas and practices being disseminated.

4: Concluding comments

The rich diversity of higher education discourages generalisations about staffing in the sector. Nevertheless this study has highlighted some of the perceived benefits of working in higher education, and policies that promote the recruitment, retention and promotion of academic staff. This report also draws attention to the limitations put upon individuals' careers largely through poor equality of opportunity practices in HEIs. Those staff especially affected have worked part-time and/or for long periods on short fixed term contracts – styles of working that tend to exclude them, for example, in criteria for promotion.

It is perhaps disappointing that even now there are few appraisal, mentoring or career guidance schemes perceived as helpful, or even available in higher education. However this is hardly surprising since higher education cultures emphasise individualism and few expect their managers to have management training.

The major drive to promote research in universities and the concomitant funding priorities have resulted in staffing policies that undermine the importance of teaching.

Overall this study demonstrates that teaching, and therefore students' educational experiences, are undervalued by the dominance of research and administration in our very competitive higher education culture. Unless teaching is sufficiently valued, students will be seen as interrupting the smooth progress of an institution. Where student progress is perceived as the main reason for higher education, administration supports their development and research enriches the culture.

The findings from this study suggests that to recruit, retain and promote the best staff in higher education, it is time to restore the balance, a view endorsed by the new chief executive of HEFCE:

> *University research is central to the knowledge-based economy. But so are other essential activities: teaching and learning, knowledge transfer, the broader contributions that all of higher education makes to civil society in our communities and regions. Research, still less the RAE, should not be allowed to distort behaviour and divert the sector from sustaining an overall balance of excellence across the range of activities that constitute higher education today.... We need to incentivise excellence and reward performance in areas other than basic and strategic research so that the RAE will not be the exclusive focus of rewarding quality.*
> Sir Howard Newby*, Guardian Education* 13 November 2001

List of abbreviations

HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
SCRE	Scottish Council for Research in Education
HEI	Higher education institution
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
HR	Human resources
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
IIP	Investors in People
FTC	Fixed-term contract
ILT	Institute for Learning and Teaching
CPD	Continuing professional development